



Midras Rolling Stone Tomb, Israel (Image courtesy of www.HolyLandPhotos.org)

Name that tomb!

OPENING SLIDE

NAME THAT TOMB

Tombs of Muhammad, Princess Di, Jesus, Elvis, Napoleon, Mao, Marx, Buddha.

THE ODD ONE OUT?

JESUS – HIS TOMB IS EMPTY He rose from death.
MIDRAS TOMB PIC

This is what we're celebrating this morning. Jesus was dead but is alive. Jesus' body was placed in a tomb on Friday night. It may have been like the one in the picture. It's known as a rolling stone tomb. Rich people had them – this one was for a very rich person at a place called Midras in Israel. The stone was very heavy and required a team of people to move it. Usually there would be multiple burials in these tombs but we know that Jesus' tomb was a new one.

He'd been buried in a hurry so had only been quickly wrapped up with some spices thrown in for full measure. But it was normal for bodies to be properly embalmed so women came to do the job after the Sabbath on the Sunday morning. A guard had been put on the tomb and it was sealed just for good measure as the Jewish leaders had heard Jesus' prophecy that He would rise again on the third day. The disciples didn't have the same expectation.

SHOCKED WOMEN The women who arrived to finish off the embalming job were expecting to have to find someone – perhaps the guards – to shift the stone across the tomb and allow them to do the embalming. Imagine their shock to find the soldiers were gone (they had fled in fear during the night when an angel came and rolled the stone back), only to be greeted by an angel who told them that Jesus was alive again. As we heard earlier, then the appearances started – Mary, the close disciples, the wider disciples – over 500 in one place on one occasion. And the response – rather like this:
SHOCKED MEN.

JESUS Our reaction this morning is of celebration. We know the story because most of us have heard it many times before. But more's the pity for that. The resurrection is about surprise!

BRINGS SURPRISES! Before the celebration came the jaw dropping! The resurrection reminds us that we have a God who is jaw droppingly awesome! Do we find that to be true of Jesus, or is He just a routine? Jesus wants to be awesome to us and the resurrection reminds us of it. My prayer for each one of us this Easter is that we each get a picture of just how amazing and awesome God is.

The encounters with Jesus that occurred on that day were life changing. I pray that God will save us from routine! Jesus wants us to have life-changing experiences of Him. Resurrection or other awesome experiences of God don't happen everyday, but if we don't look for them, or pray for them, or ask for them, then we will end up like the disciples and have even less of an expectation of God than those who have little or no faith at all! That's not uncommon in my experience, I might add. In the Gospels, those

identifying Jesus most accurately were Gentiles and demons! The disciples – just about clueless even when it was spelt out clearly to them.

BRINGS UNDERSTANDING The resurrection didn't just bring hope, it brought understanding. The disciples were defeated, depressed, confused and all the rest of it – until they saw Jesus alive – and then all the lights went on. The risen Christ brings understanding. We know everything that Jesus said and everything He achieved on the cross for us is true because He's alive. Once the encounter with God had occurred, everything dropped into place.

Do you know Jesus? No? He's alive and can be known. In fact He wants to be known to each man and woman. He wants each person to understand how much they are loved, how much He desires that they receive forgiveness, accept the offer of eternal life, find a lifelong relationship with Him. Have you had that encounter? Then He's ready – ask Him to make Himself known to you. Ask Him to turn the lights on. It's the experience of most of us in this room today. Jesus wants it to be the same for you.

BRINGS HOPE The final thing I want to mention this morning is that the resurrection brings hope. Jesus turned a group of disciples who were defeated into a group of people whom He used to change the world. The difference was that He gave purpose to their lives and an expectation of eternity. They knew by their encounter with Him that day that everything He said about death and life was true because He'd been there and come back and He brought that hope to them.

Where's your life going this morning? If you know Jesus, then you should know, but if you're drifting along, then this is a reminder that you have a hope that underpins your life – ask Jesus to give you a fresh anointing of His Spirit; that you may again be thrilled by His awesomeness and excited as you understand more of Him. I must say that it doesn't matter how long I've been a Christian, I never cease to be amazed by Him and frequently get excited by understanding new things about Him.

The resurrection is about joy and that should characterise everyone who knows Jesus because when we get our little grey cells around it, Jesus is just simply amazing. Here's a couple of verses of Romans.

ROMANS 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

If you've never trusted Jesus before, but you realise that He's turning your lights on, that you want to know more, that you need meaning and that hope in your life, that you want to respond to that forgiveness and acceptance He offers – then your course of action is simple – just ask. He wants you to confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

Let's pray....

*Preached by Mark Reid
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